

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as currently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-12, 14-30, and 32-36 and 38-40 are currently pending. Claims 2, 13, 31, and 37 were previously canceled. The present amendment amends Claims 38, 39, and 40. No claims are newly added. Support for the amendments to Claims 38, 39, and 40 can be found in original Claims 1, 13, and 23, for example. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 38 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Yasui et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,567,643, hereafter “Yasui”); Claim 39 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Kawai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,021,286, hereafter “Kawai”); and Claim 40 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as anticipated by Sasamoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,324,374, hereafter “Sasamoto”). Claims 1, 3-12, 14-30, and 32-36 were allowed.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that Claims 1, 3-12, 14-30, and 32-36 are allowed.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 38 as anticipated by Yasui, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

Amended Claim 38 recites, “backup rollers, each having a volumetric resistivity of at least $10^9 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$.”

The outstanding Office Action points to auxiliary member (325) of Yasui for the feature of backup rollers. However, the auxiliary member 325 of Yasui is not disclosed as having a volumetric resistivity of at least $10^9 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$. Rather, auxiliary members (325) are merely described in terms of their physical relationship with the belt (321) and coil spring

(326) and are not disclosed as having the above-noted resistivity.¹ Accordingly, Yasui fails to disclose all of the features recited in amended Claim 38.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 39 as anticipated by Kawai, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

Amended Claim 39 recites, in part:

wherein said backup rollers, constituting auxiliary rollers for forming nips for image transfer, each are positioned close to the nip of a particular image transfer position at an upstream side of said nip in a direction of movement of said image transfer belt.

Accordingly, the backup rollers are positioned near the nip portion, but upstream of the nip portion.

In contrast, Kawai does not disclose backup rollers positioned as described above. The outstanding Office Action points to rollers 8-1, 8-2, 8-3, and 8-4 for the feature of backup rollers as recited in Claim 39.² However, as shown in Figure 3, none of the rollers 8-1, 8-2, 8-3, or 8-4 is positioned near to and upstream of the nip portion as recited in amended Claim 39. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claim 39 patentably distinguishes over Kawai for at least the reasons discussed above.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 40 as anticipated by Sasamoto, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

Amended Claim 40 recites, in part, “high-resistance backup-rollers each positioned close to said nip at an upstream side of said nip in a direction of movement of said intermediate image transfer belt and having a volumetric resistivity of at least $10^9 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$.”

In contrast, Sasamoto does not teach or suggest backup-rollers having a volumetric resistivity of at least $10^9 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$. The outstanding Office Action points to auxiliary rollers (80), (76), (75), and (74) for the feature of backup-rollers as recited in Claim 40. However,

¹ Yasui col. 16, lines 31-34.

² Office Action of October 28, 2005, page 3.

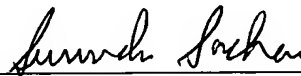
none of the rollers (80), (76), (75), and (74) are disclosed as having a volumetric resistivity of at least $10^9 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$. Instead, Sasamoto describes the rollers (80), (76), (75), and (74) as grounded conductive rollers. Sasamoto states, "as for supporting rollers 71-76 and 80, a grounded conductive rollers (e.g., a metal roller) may be used."³ Accordingly, Sasamoto fails to disclose all of the features of amended Claim 40, and Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claim 40 patentably distinguishes over Sasamoto for at least the reasons discussed above.

As all of the features recited in amended Claims 38, 39, and 40 were recited in original Claims 1, 2, 12, 13, 23, and 24, Applicants respectfully submit that no new issues of patentability are raised by the present amendments and respectfully request that the amendments to Claims 38, 39, and 40 be entered.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendments, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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³³ Sasamoto, col. 12, lines 1-2.